WHO AM I WRITING FOR? AN EXPLORATION OF THE INFLUENCES OF THE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SPHERE IN DIARY KEEPING

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ABSTRACT

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In our present day, thousands of people keep a diary—personally, I can say I have kept a journal for most of my adolescent years. When looking back on my own writing, I am interested in the ways that my thoughts processes and descriptions have evolved or stayed the same with time. I began to wonder, what is the purpose and meaning behind a journal or diary? If one writes a journal for her own eyes only, then there's likely some sort of individual self-exploration or private growth tied in with the process. Charlotte Perkins Gilman kept diaries for most of her life that she did not intend to publish when she first began to write them. However, many diaries were meant to become public from the start, and serve an entirely different purpose—for instance, May Sarton's, *Journal of a Solitude*. I am particularly interested in these notions of the public and private sphere in relation to keeping a diary and how this affects the overall tone or purpose behind the authors' writings. When one writes with the intent of publication, how does this shift in audience affect the way we understand the text's rhetoric of disclosure? How does the language change when compared with a diary that focuses on private intent? Can these two spheres be truly separated or is there ultimately a fusion of both? These are the questions that I discuss in my thesis. In light of these studies of spheres of influence, I conclude with the reflections on my own journals and the motivations behind my entries.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Thousands of American women across the United States keep a journal. Whether it's a high school notebook with hearts and doodles on the border or a tough leather journal that lasts through adulthood, keeping a diary has and continues to be a part of many lives. Throughout my own life, I too constantly find myself drawn to write my experiences and words out in a journal.

We know that people keep diaries…but why? This is an immensely broad question that varies from century to century. Ranging from social context to religious provocations, the purpose of keeping a journal twists and reshapes with every new era. However, while there are variances in motivations behind keeping a diary, there are also consistencies that transcend generations. Two main motivations I will focus on when analyzing journals and diaries are the private and the public intent.

In order to better understand the impetus behind keeping a journal, I have ventured to analyze and compare two different published diaries by well-known authors, as well as my own personal journal. By looking at writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman's, *The Diaries of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* and May Sarton's *Journal of a Solitude*, the private and public the motivations behind keeping a diary can be better understood and analyzed.

The first diary I venture to analyze and consider in relation to the private and public sphere is May Sarton's *Journal of a Solitude,* which was published in 1973. Just the title, *Journal of a Solitude* encapsulates the vulnerability within Sarton's entries: she documents her feelings of loneliness in a manner that reveals both the beauty and sadness of her mind and how she interprets the world around her. Furthermore, Sarton desired the publication of her diaries from

the start. In this sense, Sarton purposefully wrote her personal or "private" experiences in a way that can be universally understood by the public.

The next diary to be analyzed is Charlotte Perkin Gilman's, *The Diaries of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*. A writer born in the late 19th century, Gilman kept a diary from her adolescent years into her adulthood. Her daughter Katharine donated these diaries to the Schlesinger Library after Gilman's death. Afterwards, Denise Knight transcribed and published them as, *The Diaries of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* in 1995. While some may expect a dairy to be confessional in nature and full of raw emotions, Gilman's diaries prove the opposite: they are cut and dry passages that usually ecompass an account of her day and typically lack vulnerable entries. Though Gilman's life consisted of immense hardship—ranging from an impoverished childhood to undergoing societal pressures of motherhood and experiences of post-partum depression, Gilman's diaries reflect a somewhat emotionally-distant woman who finds comfort and order in keeping track of her days in a matter of fact manner. This is not to say that Gilman lacked these emotional capabilities, but rather, that she did not use her diary as a medium to portray such feelings. While Gilman's desire served private purposes throughout her life, she later desired that her diaries be used to help craft an autobiography for public consumption.

After analyzing Sarton's *Journal of a Solitude* and Gilman's *The Diaries of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, I will compare and contrast these two texts. Unlike Gilman's text, Sarton's entries prove to be immensely more introspective and reflective. They transport the reader into her every day, rather than simply list a straightforward account. When compared to Sarton, Gilman's entries seem to fulfill a different purpose—to track her activities in a manner that typically lacks reflection and emotional commentary. However, when looking at this journal and diary side by side, similarities emerge as well—both authors used their journals as a means of

organization. For Sarton, she uses her journal as a stimulant, and for Gilman, she uses her diary as a relaxant. Furthermore, both accounts reveal women who struggled with mental illness and the social expectations of their time.

After understanding the tendencies of the private and public spheres within these two journals, I venture to understand the influences within my own journal. When going through my diaries, similarities between Gilman and Sarton become apparent. Like Gilman, there are times in my diary when I tend to abbreviate uncomfortable thoughts as a coping mechanism to avoid acknowledging my most intense emotions. Furthermore, like Gilman, I often document more vulnerable emotions in mediums outside of my diary. In a sense, I have different variations of privacy: the level of privacy I feel within my diary, and the level of privacy I feel in sources outside my diary. However, like Sarton, I also intertwine descriptive entries that describe my emotions and reactions in depth. Just as Sarton hopes her diary can be used as a mechanism for universal understanding, I have shared some of my entries as a way to share my experiences with others in the hopes that it can not only help the audience understand what I was feeling, but furthermore, to portray these feelings in an entertaining manner. Thus, my diary holds a fusion of both the public and private influences.

Beyond the Private Sphere

When a woman keeps a journal, whom is she keeping it for? For strictly herself? For others to eventually read? When pondering these questions, it's significant to consider the purposes of *women's diaries*—as motivations of the opposite sex can serve a different agenda. If one were to ask the average woman for a peek into their night table journal, she would likely respond with a look of shock, followed by a strong no. When thinking of our own journals, the idea of sharing personal entries that encompass our innermost thoughts and confessional musings seems far from comfortable. However, can one go so far to say that women's diaries have not been written to reach beyond the private sphere? Furthermore, how can we better understand if the writer wrote with an implicit audience in mind?

The first and perhaps most logical clue into understanding a writer's intended audience when keeping a journal is to see to whom the writings are addressed. For example, if the writer addresses her entries as "you" or "the reader" then that may signal that the journal keeper intended some sort of audience beyond herself. While many unpublished diaries are fragmented, sporadic, and may not make logical sense, it's the "audience hovering at the edge of the page…that provides the impetus either for initial writing" or for transforming previously fragmented entries into "a carefully crafted, contextually coherent work"(Bloom 23). Thus, when we keep a diary, we have the option of how we want to format it. Will it be in some sort of abbreviated language or hold a few specific words that are only understandable to ourselves? Or, will it be written in a manner than can be easily digested by an outside reader—both in terms of syntax and narrative? In other words, a diary that seems more polished and coherent supports the notion that the diary writer intended to publish because she is considering a reader beyond herself. Writer Lynn Z. Bloom, author of the essay, " 'I Write for Myself and Strangers': Private

Diaries as Public Documents," argues that journal keepers who write with an "audience hovering at the edge of the page" ultimately write with more of a purpose and desire for a better "carefully crafted" work.

For instance, looking at May Sarton's *Journal of a Solitude*, it becomes apparent that Sarton likely knew and wanted her diary entries to be shared with others from the beginning. Going back to the previous discussed clue, while Sarton primarily speaks in the first person, she also uses "we." This pronoun provides the first piece of evidence in determining that Sarton desired a public audience. However, Sarton's desire for an outside nature goes beyond the obvious fact that she agreed to publication and used pronouns that indicate an audience beyond herself. Her desire for public consumption goes deeper into the more abstract underlying messages that arise from her entries. For example, Sarton's wish to publish goes hand in hand with her desire to help others emotionally through her entries and furthermore, to bring to light women's issues of the time.

In order to understand how Sarton felt that she could help others by publicizing her entries, it's imperative to consider her own emotional state when she wrote her journal. May Sarton was an American poet, novelist, and memoirist who lived from 1912-1995, and wrote *Journal of a Solitude* in her late fifties. Sarton was born in Belgium, from which she and her family moved to England, and eventually, to the United States due to the outbreak of World War I. Sarton was "extremely popular on college campuses…and became a heroine to feminists"(Gussow 1). In 1965, she publicly announced she was a lesbian, and lost two jobs as a result. Even if we were to know no biographical information prior to reading Sarton's journals, it becomes undeniably evident that she struggled with depression and loneliness. In an early entry from her journal, she records her energy that goes into cooking and entertaining for a guest. She

writes, "Nevertheless, getting ready for a guest…seemed an almost insuperable effort because I am so depressed"(Sarton 27). Such statements of extreme sadness and fatigue are prevalent throughout the journal.

While *Journal of a Solitude* may appear to some as simply a woman's outlet for her mental struggles, in reality, her journal serves a greater purpose beyond herself. Despite her fatigue and depressive state, Sarton views her internal struggle and skills as a writer as an opportunity to help others. Thus, while on one hand she uses her journal for her own personal reasons and incentives, on the other hand, she broadcasts her privacy to others so the public can benefit. In essence, the writer who writes for others does so for a variety of reasons. Namely, for Sarton, she writes so is that her diary can provide comfort to her readers through her experiences and commentary. For instance in the following entry, Sarton writes:

October 17th

> I do not feel disloyal when I talk about my own life or that of the many others who pour in here in one way or another….What I am loyal to, I hope, is something more complex….I believe we learn through the experiences of others as well as through our own…it seems natural to me to wish share these…dilemmas and pangs.…Many feel that their suffering is unique. It is comforting to know that we are all in the same boat. (Sarton 45-6)

A variety of public veins pulse in this passage. First, Sarton addresses the notion of breaching privacy, or disloyalty. In this instance, she's referring to the fact that she's unveiling information to the reader that is not just her own—in other words, she includes encounters with her friends,

thus extending a peek into not only her private life, but other individuals in her life as well. While Sarton upholds anonymity by using abbreviations in reference to certain people she discusses, she is still using other's private experiences in a public manner. However, she feels no guilt or betrayal when doing so. Instead, Sarton exclaims that her truest loyalties are dedicated to sharing these experiences, or "dilemmas and pangs." Thus, Sarton's intentions aren't tied to retaining a sense of physical privacy, but rather, dedicated to unveiling universal truths that she derives from her experiences. In essence, Sarton realizes a harsh irony of human nature—that despite the fact that everybody suffers, everybody feels that her suffering is unique. Knowing this truth, Sarton uses her diary to address this issue head on. In exposing this irony, Sarton feels no sense of moral turmoil in terms of breaching privacy because she is not breaching, but rather, empowering, and providing a testimony to other women's experiences. Furthermore, Sarton feels no notion of disloyalty to herself, as she is fulfilling a personal calling as a writer to act as "an instrument for experiencing" and to share her voice for the benefit of others (Sarton 77).

This notion of isolated suffering is not surprising considering the time period during which Sarton lived. She experienced an era in which discussion around mental illness was considered taboo. Studies found that in the 1950's, "public conceptions [of mental illness] were suffused with negative stereotypes, fear, and rejection" (Phelan et al. 188). Furthermore, certain scholars of the time period feel that because mental illness was "defined in such narrow terms," the public "feared rejected, and devalued people with mental illnesses"(Phelan et al 188). During the 1950's, when this overarching mentality towards mental illness was rampant, Sarton was in her late thirties. Interestingly, *Journal of a Solitude* was written in the early 1970's, and published in 1973, when Sarton was in her early sixties. Thus, Sarton grew up in a period when those who from suffered illnesses such as depression felt isolated and alone. While these

perceptions may have slightly thawed in her later years when *Journal of a Solitude* was written, the reality is, her writing encapsulates and challenges a time that was not open to a discussion of mental illness.

While one purpose behind Sarton's publication of her journal was to provide comfort to those with mental health issues, Sarton simultaneously brings to light the social pressures that many women faced during this time period. In the following, Sarton writes:

January 2nd

> Whatever college does not do, it does create a climate where work is demanded…then quite suddenly a young woman, if she marries, has to diverge completely from this way of life, while her husband simply goes on toward the goals set in college. She is expected to cope not with ideas, but with cooking food, washing dishes, doing laundry…she has what she thought she wanted, so she suffers guilt and dismay to feel so disoriented. (Sarton 70)

While the early 1970's, the period in which Sarton wrote *Journal of a Solitude*, was marked by "shifting public attitudes about gender roles" and "produced unprecedented opportunities for women" it still posed challenges for females. These struggles entailed the shifting and lingering pressures of upholding the "put-together housewife" persona (Moen 136). Many women privately grappled with these struggles while simultaneously attempting to portray a forced happy image to others. Sarton takes these private struggles that women faced and brings them to public light in her entries. While Sarton herself was lesbian and never had children, she still clearly relates to the constraints on women and assumptions that women's lives would conform

to the expectations of heterosexuality. Furthermore, while many women felt too ashamed or fearful to openly discuss how they actually felt with others, Sarton provides them with the voice that they do not have. For example, Sarton includes a letter from her friend that she refers to as "K" in the same entry. K's letter opens with her discomfort yet simultaneous realizations that come with the changing dimensions of the 70's:

> …Many of our friends now are pathetically worried about aging and full of envy for young people…and these are parents of small children, under thirty! I think it is a very destructive system indeed….I'm hopelessly out of tune with these times and it's a temptation to join the haranguers.…I'm beginning to see that *the* obstruction is being female

K goes on to discuss the Women's movement and finding a voice:

> …I am grateful to all the crazies out there in the Women's Liberation; we need them….I have really seen something new about myself this year….I have always been rejecting language because it is a male invention….My voice in my own poems, though coming out of myself, became a masculine voice on the page, and I felt the need to destroy that voice, that role….It is not just my equation but a whole family tradition, which decrees a deep and painful timidity for the women; and for me this was always especially intolerable, since the personality I was born with was the very opposite of passive! (Sarton 72)

It's evident that through K's own personal and private experiences, she is beginning to realize that she has her own voice amidst a traditionally masculine environment. However, while K has come to the powerful realization that she has a voice, she is still uncomfortable in the ways that men affect it, and struggles to let this newfound voice free in her domestic environment, despite the fact that her personality is "the very opposite of passive." Sarton comments on the included letter, writing that "this letter goes to the heart of the matter…for what is really is at stake is unbelief in the woman as artist, as creator"(Sarton 72). By publicizing K's letter within her journal entries, Sarton not only allows K's burgeoning "creator" to emerge, but she also aims to engage her readers in finding their own voice as well. Without publishing her entries, such a movement could not happen. As Louise DeSalvo says in her study of Virginia Woolf: "In its most radical manifestation, a diary is a potential historical time bomb; it lies in waiting until it explodes misapprehensions about the past, misconceptions about the role of women or other outside groups in history, misrepresentations about how a particular life was lived" (Schiwy 235). Thus, it can be argued that Sarton's journal writing and her efforts at bringing other women's thoughts to view encapsulate a "quintessential form of feminist writing" because Sarton's journals expose the reality of women's lives and their desires for the future (Schiwy 236). While Sarton's entries are personal, they simultaneously signal a public movement to bring to light the realities of women's lives.

In essence, Sarton breaks the societal seal and gives a voice of comfort and a sense of community to those who have suffered similar experiences as herself—and she does so through the effectiveness and power of publicizing journal entries. Her desire to heal and promote awareness shows throughout her writings, including phrases such as, "I am made aware that my work, odd though it seems, does help people" and "the self tells me that I was meant to live

alone, mean to write poems for others—poems that seldom in my life have reached the one person for whom they were intended"(Sarton 207). Based on these statements, it is evident what Sarton felt was the purpose behind the publications of her works.

While Sarton's entries feel vulnerable and honest, the inevitable question that arises with an intended published diary emerges: if Sarton knew she wanted her journal to be published, how does this desire affect the overall nature of her work? Can it be assumed that Sarton aimed to be transparent with not only others, but with herself as well—or is there the possibility that she edited her writings down to what she was comfortable with the public reading? The reality is, "keeping a *Journal of a Solitude* for publication meant that Sarton edited herself for her readers: each journal became a performance of sorts"(Teleky 77). Sarton could have distorted her truest nature in a variety ways—Sarton's entries all make logical sense, and furthermore, are polished. Thus, Sarton's original entries likely involved numerous edits. While this includes grammatical editing, it is not assumptive to say that this process involved *content* editing as well. That is not to say Sarton's emotions were made up, but rather, that she was able to describe her darkest emotions in a manner that she felt was acceptable for public consumption. Thus, it is possible Sarton changed her most raw, painful entries to a mode that was catered for an outside reader. In Sarton's last entry, she writes:

September 30th

> …This journal began a year ago with depression, much self-questioning about my dangerous and destructive angers….I made great efforts at control and sometimes I succeeded….But there were things between X and me that could not be solved….I begin to have intimations now, of a return to some deep self that has

> been too absorbed and too battered to function for a long time…perhaps we write toward what we will become from where we are.…Once more the house and I are alone. (Sarton 208-8)

In a way, Sarton is acknowledging that what is exhibited in her journal and the emotions she felt along the process may have not been identical. For instance, phrases such as, "I made great efforts at control" and "perhaps we write toward what we will become from where we are" signals that her journal entries perhaps served as a place to exercise where Sarton hoped to be emotionally, and not necessarily what she actually felt at that given time. While some may feel that because of this editing, *Journal of a Solitude* does not reveal Sarton's truest nature, this is beside the point in Sarton's view.

Sarton recognized the paradox of publishing a private journal for public consumption—but she summed up her attitude with a saying from her friend Elizabeth Bowen, the Anglo-Irish novelist: "One must regard oneself impersonally as an instrument"(Teleky 77). In other words, Sarton viewed herself as an instrument for the public. Her intention was not to showcase hyper-specific experiences that others could not relate to, but rather, to broadcast her daily experiences in a way that could she considered universal. Sarton writes, "One must believe that private dilemmas are, if deeply examined universal, and so, if expressed, have a human value beyond the private, and one must also believe in the vehicle for expressing them, in the talent" (Sarton 60). Thus, while the reader may not be experiencing the purest, unedited version of Sarton available, she *is* experiencing the Sarton who struggled, and wrote this struggle both captivatingly and effectively. However, this concept begs another question…what would this most "available" version of Sarton look like? A completely unedited version of Sarton may be a version of Sarton

that is not accessible in written form, but rather, coming to understand Sarton in a more holistic way: through personal interaction, letters, etc. Stripping these outside sources to solely relying on comprehension of Sarton through her journal entries leaves room for interpretation as to what her actual nature was like.

Thus, the answer to whether Sarton's *Journal of a Solitude* presents an accurate portrayal of the self lies within the reader's own definition of what a diary is. If the reader feels that a diary is a private, unedited, recording of daily experiences, then consequently Sarton's *Journal of a Solitude* would not fit this mold. However, if the reader feels that a diary is a recording of one's musings and daily experiences, whether they be edited or not, then *Journal of a Solitude* does check the box. Bloom argues that for a professional writer "there are no private writings"(Bloom 24). She claims, "The writer's mind is invariably alert to the concerns of an audience (Bloom 24). In other words, she feels that in order for even personal writing to be meaningful, it must have been written in a way that another could understand. She comments that diaries that are "truly private" are "bare-bone works written primarily to keep records of receipts" and are "written with neither art or artifice"(Bloom 24). Thus, there are a variety of arguments to be made. Sarton's journal is clearly created to be understood, and furthermore, presents itself as a reflective art form. According to Bloom, this purpose doesn't take away the authenticity of Sarton's work. However, others may disagree—feeling that truly private diaries can extend beyond lists and unemotional accounts to reflective journals that the writer never intended to publish when they wrote it, unlike Sarton.

Though Sarton wrote her journal for public consumption that is not to say that she wrote her diary without any personal motivations in mind. In fact, in order for Sarton herself to benefit from the journal keeping, she needed to write knowing there would be an outside audience. It

becomes evident that Sarton found journal keeping as a way to give order and purpose to her day, an essential activity for coping with her depression. In the following entry, Sarton writes:

November 10th

> I myself am slack. What is needed is a frame, an order….I am in limbo that needs to be patterned from within. People who have regular jobs can have no idea of just this problem of ordering a day that has no pattern imposed on it from without.…If there is any motivation here, it is always self-ordering, self-exploratory, a perpetual keeping gear in order for that never-ending journey. (Sarton 53)

Sarton reveals her personal incentive for keeping this journal—to give order and purpose to her days. The act of keeping a diary provides structure and reflection, and furthermore, motivation to stay active. While the process of journal keeping requires activity in itself, the journal keeper must experience in order to have things to write about. For Sarton, this involves exercises such as gardening and making an effort to meet with friends. Furthermore, Sarton's journal keeping acts as a tool to catalyze engagement if she begins to slip into despondency. In other words, if Sarton begins to lapse into isolation and decreased activity, she can at least use her journal as a means to reflect on this as opposed to doing nothing at all. Furthermore, having an invisible audience waiting for her words prompts Sarton into motion—it provides incentive, and in another sense, comfort. While Sarton's entries reveal a grappling with both the beauty and sadness she experiences in solitude, she can find a sense of abstract community and comfort in knowing that her experiences will be read by others.

Aside from acting as a tool to cope with depression, Sarton's journal allows her to cope with public criticism. Sarton is clearly sensitive to critiques, as a negative *Times* review of her work sends her spiraling into a depressed state. Sarton writes:

> January 13
>
> …I am forced to try to come to terms with myself and face the destroyer and breaker in me. I do not feel remorse so much as shame. I still feel bruised by that *Times* review. It did throw me off balance. It was like being tripped and thrown to the ground just as one has started the race to win. (Sarton 85)

This journal entry illuminates just how affected Sarton is by this review. Not only does it "bruise" her feelings, but also it throws her "off balance." However, when considering the public and private relationship in this passage, the text proves to be an interesting representation of the spheres of influence at play. While Sarton's *Journal of a Solitude* is a manifestation of Sarton's private life transformed for public consumption, this passage unveils a new, intriguing dynamic—in this case, Sarton is performing the reversal. She is taking in *public* information, confronting it through *private* means, and making it public again. Thus, Sarton's diary encompasses a more complex relationship, because she uses the public nature of her diary in a variety of manners—both for others, and for herself.

May Sarton's *Journal of a Solitude* shows us that not all journals were written with a private intent. Sarton's entries reveal that she desired her readers to gain something through the publication of her personal activities—whether that is finding comfort in the fact that those who struggle with mental illness are not alone or gaining a better understanding of the social

expectations women of the 70's struggled with. However, while Sarton used the public sphere to help others, she also used it for herself. The task of keeping a journal and having a desire to get it published gave Sarton agendas to help her cope with her depression. Furthermore, knowing that her writings would be read by others provided her with a sense of comfort amidst her isolation. While Sarton's entries were edited and perhaps not completely transparent since she wrote with intent of publication, they still exemplify a version of what a diary can be—and furthermore, unveil personal experiences in a way that can be universally understood.

Privacy and The Diary

When we imagine keeping a diary or journal, what words come to mind? Perhaps we conceptualize a setting for self-expression, a mode of free and unrestrained thinking. It can be a therapeutic tool—a safe space to explore identity and ask challenging questions, both about the world and about the self. As stated by journal scholar Marlene Schiwy, "It can encourage self-awareness…allow for cathartic expression without fear of censorship or recrimination; provides a safe testing ground for questions and half-formed thoughts…and stimulates the flow of ideas by removing the fear of premature critical judgment"(Schiwy 235). Thus, the diary can act as a safe space for unrestricted expression. Unlike our day-to-day activities and outward expressions that receive constant response from others, both positive and negative, the diary can act a space to let go and speak freely.

When considering all these characteristics that make up a diary, it's important to consider what specifically about diaries gives us these feelings of "cathartic expression[s] without fear." Perhaps somewhat obviously, the underlying theme that motivates a diary's purpose is its element of *privacy*. Freedom of self-expression is made possible through the notion that our growth and identity formations jotted throughout the pages will not automatically be susceptible to the judgments of others. Furthermore, the diary serves as a tool to keep thoughts and musings in a secluded, yet equally tangible manner that and can be reflected on at a later time if desired. Unlike our personal inner thoughts, which flow in and out of our minds throughout the day, a private diary is a mode of written expression that can be re-read and understood in a tangible manner. In this way, the diary not only serves as a private "stream of consciousness" exercise for the present, but can be used in the future for reflection, meditation, and personal growth through the process of re-reading past entries.

Thus, when considering a journal or diary, we are naturally led to consider its element of privacy and the implications that come with this sense of confidentiality. While on one hand the element of privacy allows an unrestrained space, it simultaneously acts as a force of excitement. The notion of writing down thoughts that would normally not be shared with the public may be fearful to some, but invigorating to others. What makes the diary a unique medium is that the emotions it prompts within each individual diary-keeper is unique. For some, they feel fear, but for others, diaries can serve as a secret-keeper…a place to vent, dream, fantasize, and muse in peace.

One may feel that keeping a journal entails certain requirements: the writer intends her diary to be private, the diary is kept private from others, and that privacy equates to honest writing. In reality, none of these characteristics can be generalized to every diary. In fact, many diaries hold combinations of these statements, all, or none at all. As stated by *The New York Times* writer Lena Williams, "Diaries...often reveal a more personalized record of the life, attitudes and thinking of people…people are not always honest [and] the omission or altering of everyday occurrences and events by journal keepers could slightly skew history for future generations"(Williams 1). In other words, while diaries can reveal lots of information about a specific person or time period, this doesn't constitute a reality. Their portrayal may be incorrect because it is derived from one person's perspective. Furthermore, Williams comments that because entries aren't necessarily factual, such information can alter the future perceptions of what a past specific era was like. In essence, using the diary as a historical tool can be helpful, but must be read with the understanding that the writings may be skewed to the writer's perspective.

In order to understand what privacy truly means when considering a diary, it's imperative to consider historical matters. While privacy may be a consistent intention or desired aspect in recent generations, that does not mean that the notion of privacy has held constant in the past. In order to understand the evolution of privacy and the diary, we must better understand the history of privacy itself. While privacy itself can be somewhat difficult to define and is not a "clear cut concept", one thing is for certain: the idea of privacy and the weight it carries with its meaning are and have been "developed in specific historical circumstances"(Keulen, Kroeze 4). In other words, privacy, and in turn, privacy in relation to the diary, evolves with each time period. While the idea of privacy itself is an immensely broad topic that spans from the time of Aristotle to the current state of affairs, for the sake of understanding the more significant roots regarding the diary in relation to privacy, we will focus on summarizing the period between the 15th and 18th century.

The idea of privacy as a tool for identity exploration mainly emerged during the Renaissance and Reformation. During these times, personal writing was "linked to the emergence of individualism and a middling sector in society that had both the time to take up intellectual labour, and-unlike the rulers and lower strata of society, the liberty to choose their own living space"(Keulen, Kroeze 25). In other words, the idea of writing as a method to explore identity was only available to those who not only had the time to write, but the space to write as well. Merchants, scholars and the clergy, who compiled the middle class, began to "reflect and to write to fellow souls about their inner feelings"(Keulen, Kroeze 25). After the invention of the printing press in 1440, books and letters were dispersed throughout Europe. When private letters and writings were then compared to these now widely spread public mediums, scholars could see how individuals "created a distinction between the private and public persona" (Keulen, Kroeze

25). As a result of this emphasis towards using the private sphere towards retreat and reflection, the diary soon "became a place of definition and management of the self and thus a place of privacy"(Keulen, Kroeze 25). In fact, according to historian Philippe Aries, England was known as the 'birthplace of privacy' at the end of the fifteenth century (Keulen, Kroeze 25). From this point forward, the diary could now be associated within the private realm.

In the eighteenth century, the use of a public sphere also impacted the nature of privacy. In England, the printing press was deregulated, which in turn lead to a rise in periodicals and newspapers (Keulen, Kroeze 26). As methods of communication grew and technologies improved, privacy further evolved, thus further influencing the nature of the diary. The rise in newspaper circulation lead to an increase in public fascination—citizens could readily learn more about the space and people around them via readings in "coffeehouses, clubs, pubs, and playhouses"(Keulen, Kroeze 27). In turn, individuals began to take interest in what his or her *own* or *private* thoughts were regarding this new and accessible information.

Thus, the rise of individualism in the Renaissance laid the foundation for a desire to reflect in a written form. The invention of the printing press allowed scholars to differentiate between public writings that were widely dispersed and private writings that were beginning to take popularity with the increase of public consumption. Finally, the increase of technological innovations in the 1800's and onwards lead to increased accessibility to such mediums. With the historical foundations in place, the rise of the diary and the relationship of the private and public unfolded.

Now that a brief understanding of the history of privacy in relation to the diary has been explained, we can approach the mental and physical *process* of writing in a journal. As mentioned earlier, even if a diary is safe from prying eyes and is "private" in this sense, this

characteristic does not necessarily mean that the writings within the journal are truly honest or transparent. In other words, even if the reader tucks her diary away in a space safe from curious eyes, she may still not feel comfortable writing down her genuine thoughts. In reality, once a writer puts her pen to paper, her thoughts immediately take on a different form. When keeping a diary, it would be nearly impossible to write down the exact thoughts that appeared in our head as they happen in real time. If this were the case, one would have to be perpetually keeping a diary at any given moment. Furthermore, the writings would not be reflective or coherent and more of a stream of consciousness style. Instead, writing in a diary entails the mental process of making sense of the abstract emotions and thoughts that we have *throughout* the day, then relaying them in a written form, typically at a later time. Since there is a gap between the activity of thinking and the activity of writing, there is an infinite amount of room to articulate something in a manner that may not be accurate, whether intentionally or not.

Thus, the private diary offers more complexities than what one would initially expect. For instance, gaps in journal entries can have meaning. When we come across a gap, a variety of possible interpretations for why a break in the entries appears: Was the gap emotionally related? For instance, was the writer feeling despondent or depressed, which resulted in a lack of writing? Or, was the writer extremely busy that week, and simply lacked the time to maintain a daily entry. The multi-faceted nature of the diary goes beyond just gaps. Doodles or scraps of paper added to the journal later can signal a variety of interpretations behind the writer as well. Were these papers simply added because the diary was not readily at hand when the writer had a pressing thought, or did the writer keep these scraps in a separate place away from the diary because the scraps of paper revealed more sensitive musings? Thus, it's imperative when analyzing a diary that has been determined as a "private" source to not assume that its privacy

equates other characteristics, but rather, to be open minded and consider other possible meanings. Furthermore, it's important to keep in mind that just because a writer kept her diary for private purposes throughout her life does not mean that her desire for a public eye could evolve at a later point.

In order to understand the element of private influence within a dairy, perhaps one of the most perplexing, heartbreaking, yet beautiful texts to explore belongs to writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Charlotte Anna Perkins was "born on July 3, 1860, in Hartford, Connecticut, to the great-niece of author and abolitionist advocate Harriet Beecher Stowe"(Knight, "The Diaries of Charlotte Perkins Gilman Volume 1" xiv). Gilman's childhood was filled with a variety of struggles—she experienced "loneliness, isolation, and poverty"(Knight, "The Diaries Volume 1" xiv). Her father, a talented librarian and fiction writer, left the family when Gilman was nine years old. Adding to a distant father was Gilman's emotionally closed off mother, who rarely expressed any sort of affection towards Gilman. Due to financial conditions, Gilman's family had to "move nineteen times in just eighteen years…which left Gilman with only four years of formal schooling"(Knight, "The Abridged Diaries of Charlotte Perkins Gilman" xi). Despite a challenging childhood, Gilman "fostered an incredibly strong individual spirit…and an enduring devotion to work"(Knight, "The Abridged Diaries" xii). By Gilman's early twenties, she decided she wanted to devote her life to contribute "something meaningful to humanity"(Knight, "The Abridged Diaries" xii). Going forward, Gilman paved the way for feminist rights—she lectured to women's clubs, produced the groundbreaking work, *Women and Economics*, wrote, edited, and published the *Forerunner* (a progressive monthly magazine) and more. Yet in another, perhaps less planned manner, Gilman contributed to society via her diaries.

It appears that Gilman initially did not intend to publish her journals. Unlike other diary keepers, such as May Sarton, who constantly crafted and tweaked their journals into desired pieces for anticipated publication, Gilman focused on simply recording her day-to-day events in an unedited manner. This purpose is emphasized by the ways in which she wrote her diaries—except for her early journals, "the diaries that Charlotte Perkins Gilman kept…are not characterized by any kind of conscious literary style…. She was not in the least concerned with producing a set of documents that could be lauded for their sophisticated eloquence or artistic effect"(Knight, "The Diaries Volume 1" xvii). Instead, Gilman's diaries can be described as a somewhat straightforward account of her daily activities, and may even be thought of as mundane or repetitive to an outside reader. Take the following passages, entries that were written when Gilman was in her teenage years. The entries encapsulate a tone that is not uncommon throughout Gilman's other accounts:

Thurs. July 3. 1879

My 19th birthday. No gifts but those beforehand. Celebrate by having teeth filled. Rather enjoy it…

Sat. July 5. 1879

More tooth filled. Martha L over. We babble in the woods.

Wed. July 16. 1879

Letter from Martha Luther. Answer it. Am blue. Very blue. Lively thunderstorm.

Sun, July 20.

> …We go out, a lot of us one day…the boys swim, and I trot off and go to sleep under a tree quite romantically. Am prosaically discovered by Edward who awakes me with a "Hullo! Here she is."…. Nice boy, E. I like him in a grandmotherly sort of way. (Knight, "The Diaries Volume 1" 14-15)

Just from these few entries, a variety of characteristics can be drawn about Gilman. We can see that despite the brevity of her passages, an emerging writer becomes apparent.

Gilman experiences common emotions of any nineteen year old girl, such as thoughts on boys and a desire to chat or "babble" with her best friend, Martha. Furthermore, Gilman clearly has a sense of wit, as demonstrated by the way she describes her unreciprocated affection towards boy E, phrasing her feelings as "lik[ing] him in a grandmotherly sort of way." From these passages, we see not only Gilman making an effort to write down her daily activities, but also that the manner in which she documents these activities is more of a list than an in depth analysis. For instance, she briefly mentions that it's her nineteenth birthday, and almost sarcastically interjects that she celebrated by having her "teeth filled." However, even if Gilman makes an effort at being brief, she cannot mask her burgeoning creativity and voice as a writer.

Despite the fact that Gilman's entries may appear as ordinary, they in fact encompass a woman's complexities, struggles, and inner thoughts both through the print on the pages and the meaning in between the lines. When approaching Gilman's entries in terms of private/public intent, it is important to consider the physical dimensions of her diaries as a mechanism to better understand the possible influences behind her writing. According to Professor Denise D. Knight, an esteemed scholar of Charlotte Perkins Gilman and editor of Gilman's published diaries,

Gilman was somewhat restricted by the size of her initial journals. Knight states, "Gilman's [first] diaries were actually very small in size." In fact, when Knight first held one of Gilman's diaries in her hands, she remembers being surprised by its smallness. In Gilman's first entry after transitioning from a smaller diary to a larger one, she writes:

> Jan 1st, 1879.
>
> Having kept a diary for three years, and not liking a set space, I herewith begin on a journal. (Knight, "The Diaries Volume 1" 6)

Thus, it's important to consider the size of Gilman's diaries, but not to assume that the space of Gilman's notebooks and diaries served as the main determinant in how Gilman expressed herself. Although Gilman expresses a desire for more space to talk freely (as exhibited in her first entry) this does not mean that she spoke as liberally in her larger diaries as in her previous commercial sized notebook. Although she initially exclaims to not liking the "set space," of the commercial sized notebook, she "soon reverted to making mostly mundane entries" within an even larger medium (Knight, Denise. "Re: Gilman's Diaries." Received by Mia Davis, 16 Feb. 2019.). In turn, we are prompted to consider why Gilman wrote in the manner she did. While associating it wholly with restricted space is tempting, in reality, there are probable psychological explanations for her somewhat "matter-of-fact" entries. There seems to be some sort of internal coping mechanism associated with her cut and dry passages.

Perhaps because so much of Gilman's life was painful and a struggle, she found comfort in purpose in documenting what appears to an outside reader as ordinary activities. During her adolescence, Gilman's days were filled with chores, school, and the challenges of poverty.

Furthermore, unlike Sarton, Gilman not only lacks the emotional capability or space to write, but she lacks the *time*. Especially in her younger years, Gilman was focused on making ends meet—whether that be selling her art, cleaning, and taking care of family members through out her life…such as her mother and eventually, the care of her own daughter, Katharine. In the following entries, taken from when Gilman was in her twenties, we see not only the busyness of her life, but the elements of stress that accompany her financial situation:

> Thurs. 6th.
>
> Up early. Mother scalds her wrist with boiling fat. A bad burn. Flour and hammemelis, as we had no plaster….Snow again last night, very heavy.…Go over to school. .75 {cents}. Get some cornplaster.
>
> Friday. Jan 7th. 1881.
>
> Snooze until 7. All serene by 12 or so. But mother has a bad headache…
>
> Saturday. Jan. 8th. 1881.
>
> Rather late. Get breakfast & sprinkle clo{thes}. Do all the work by ten.…And not a drop of hot water in the house! Take shampoo under the faucet and go out to freeze my head.…Dinner. Lizzie in. Partakes in our frugal meal…
>
> Sunday. Jan 9. 1881.
>
> Up, dressed, fires made, flats on…writing…while it was still starlight in the east. Do half the ironing and all the work… (Knight, "The Diaries Volume 1" 30-31)

From these entries, we see that Gilman is busied with chores, school, and more. However, Gilman's impoverished situation adds more of a burden to such activities. For instance, bathing, an action that many experience with pleasure, is a source of anxiety for Gilman. We are struck with the image of Gilman washing her hair without hot water…then going out to "freeze her head." While Gilman occasionally inserts writings regarding her sadness and stress during this time in her life, her entries are rarely punctuated with such descriptions. Instead of revealing such vulnerabilities, Gilman copes with these daily negativities through the orderliness and brevity of her entries. Even when her aunt dies, her entry lacks emotional comments. She writes:

> Tues. Dec 2nd. 1879
>
> ….Aunt Katie Gilman is dead! (Knight, "The Diaries Volume 1" 16)

Instead of ruminating on this loss, her passages continue as if nothing unusual happened. An entry following the reference of her aunt's death reads:

> Thurs. Dec 18th. 1879
>
> Go to school for anatomy….Pleasant lesson. Meet mother & shop till 2…(Knight, "The Diaries Volume 1" 17)

We see Gilman documenting her life in a seemingly nonchalant fashion. Like many in poverty, there is not time to dwell on grief as life must go on and survival remains of the upmost

importance. However, this is not to say that Gilman's passages don't illuminate her grief in other ways. In the following passages a few months after her Aunt's death, Gilman writes:

> Wednesday. March 31st. 1880
>
> …Aunt C. in. Mutually read "Jolly" all say, and make gawks of ourselves over the last of it. Weep and snivel consumedly. I break down, and mother reads and sobs while I stand by the stove dying my handkerchief. I don't see why it is any worse to cry over a book than to laugh over it. And bogus emotion is better than real for it leaves no sting. (Knight, "The Diaries Volume 1" 19)

Gilman admits that she would rather experience emotions that are "bogus" since they "leave no room for sting." While Gilman's entries lack an expression of direct vulnerability, this passage in particular is evidence that she chooses to portray herself this way as a defense mechanism, or shield from "sting." In essence, Gilman illustrates the truth behind her diary keeping: that acknowledging and ruminating over painful experiences is too painful.

While Gilman admits to avoiding discussing feelings of vulnerability within her diaries, that is not to say that she lacked sensitivity or didn't reveal her purest emotions through other means. In fact, Gilman kept scraps of paper independent of her diaries, entitled, "Thoughts & Figgerings" that she collected in a folder. These papers tended to "engage her intellect and to be more introspective" (Knight, Denise. "Re: Gilman's Diaries." Received by Mia Davis, 15 Feb. 2019.). However, even more than in these scraps and papers, "it was in her correspondence that we see the vulnerability and honesty of which Gilman was capable (Knight, Denise. "Re: Gilman's Diaries." Received by Mia Davis, 15 Feb. 2019.). Unlike her diary entries, Gilman

"poured her heart into her letters" (Knight, Denise. "Re: Gilman's Diaries." Received by Mia Davis, 15 Feb. 2019.). Knight notes that, "[Gilman] did not have the restriction of space that was imposed by the physical size of her diaries…she was able to let her thoughts emerge more freely" (Knight, Denise. "Re: Gilman's Diaries." Received by Mia Davis, 15 Feb. 2019.). However, there were likely other underlying elements aside from a "restriction of space" that caused Gilman to write more vulnerably in her correspondences than in her journals.

A letter inherently has layers of added trust that a diary lacks. Unlike a diary, which is typically between the writer and herself, a letter is between the writer and a trusted person. Gilman may have felt uncomfortable being vulnerable, even with herself, but it appeared to be easier for her to be vulnerable if she was sharing these emotions with trusted loved ones. Admitting sadness within a diary may alleviate *or* exacerbate feelings of isolation depending on the person, but a letter is a connection. Letters allowed Gilman to relieve herself of the emotional burdens she carried because she knew that a friend would be on the other side, and thus be able to send back feelings of support and comfort. In essence, a diary is a wager: we may come to a place of self-reliance and positive introspection through self-writing, but we may also feel more fragile after documenting our purest feelings without an outside source of comfort. While Gilman may have taken the leap of faith to begin a diary in the first place, she was not ready to take the wager of ruminating on her most painful emotions within her entries.

While Gilman may have felt uncomfortable acknowledging her financial struggles and painful childhood within her entries, it is important to note that Gilman's internal struggles and how she presented herself in her journals expanded beyond the coping mechanisms related to poverty. During the next stages of her life, Gilman grapples with losing her best friend, Martha. Martha Luther was Gilman's best friend—she "compensated, in part, for the lack of affection

shown Charlotte by her mother"(Knight, "The Diaries Volume 1" 56). Gilman revealed vulnerabilities to Martha that she did not to the rest of the world, as exhibited by their letter correspondence. Furthermore, Gilman's affection, and perhaps emotional dependency towards Martha, is exhibited by the frequency in which Martha is mentioned within Gilman's entries:

Monday. May. 23rd. 1881

Paint, paint, paint.…Martha and Mabel Hill appear a bit later…

Thurs. May 26th. 1881

…Read to Millie, school, 75 cts, go and walk home with Martha...

May 28th. Saturday. 1881

Get breakfast & wash dishes.…Martha over. (Knight, "The Diaries Volume 1" 60)

However, once Martha became engaged, her need for Gilman began to wane, and Gilman was devastated.

Though Gilman struggles with the engagement of her friend Martha, she also eventually struggles with a burgeoning romantic relationship between herself and a man named Charles Walter Stetson. While on one hand Gilman admits to "lik[ing] him and his pictures," her reactions to first meeting Stetson were "decidedly noncommittal" (Knight, "The Diaries Volume 1" 101). In contrast, "Stetson's feelings for Charlotte…quickly turned serious" (Knight, "The Diaries Volume" 101). Only two and a half weeks after meeting Gilman, Stetson proposed.

Gilman declined, but her ambivalence and confusion towards living a traditional life versus living a life as a single, independent women continued to progress. Though the presence of Stetson temporarily filled the void that Martha had left, Gilman struggled with the expectations that came with relationships at the time. As in her earlier years, Gilman's entries once again lack any mode of introspection or obvious portrayal of her vulnerability during this pivotal point in her life.

Perhaps somewhat ironically, one way in which Gilman's emotions are portrayed as more open is through Stetson's *own* diary. In Stetson's diary, he documents Gilman as saying to him:

> O my dear! My dear! The more I love you, and the more I grow accustomed to the heaven of your love, the less I wish for anything in the future….You *must* believe that I love you.…But as much as I love you I love WORK better & I cannot make the two compatible. (Knight, "The Diaries Volume 1" 102)

We see it is not Gilman's diaries that we gain further insight into a possible representation of her more sensitive and frightened emotions, but through outside sources—whether that be via letters, scraps of paper, or a different individual's diary. For instance, during the early weeks of their acquaintance, Gilman writes in a *letter* to Stetson, "You give me rich new happiness which bids fair to make up for the dear love, which I have lost" (Knight, "The Diaries Volume 1" 102). (This letter was also documented in Stetson's own diary as well). These emotions of heartache and confusion are infrequently demonstrated throughout Gilman's diaries. While Stetson's descriptions *may not necessarily* be an accurate portrayal of Gilman, the point is that his diary, combined with the letters and scraps of paper from the "Thoughts and Figgerings", paints a

different picture of Gilman. In turn, we see a woman with emotional layers—a different depiction of character than what her journals emanate.

When considering the way Gilman wrote in her diaries in relation to the private public sphere, we can see that while Gilman "occasionally merged the public and private sphere, but they were not typically "confessional" in nature (Knight, Denise. "Re: Gilman's Diaries." Received by Mia Davis, 15 Feb. 2019.). Thus, Gilman serves as an example of someone who keeps diaries for a personal purpose, but does not use the diary for introspective musings that many associate with a private journal. Instead, we see a woman who uses a diary for personal reasons outside of a confessional nature—to bring order to her life, to keep track of her daily activities and correspondences, and to cope with a stressful life through straightforward and somewhat emotionally dissociated accounts.

While Gilman's motivations for keeping a diary were a certain way during the first part of her life, as she got older, she considered the purpose of keeping a diary for autobiographical purposes. In fact, Gilman was meticulous when it came to saving "paper, notes, files, letters, and miscellany" (Knight, Denise. "Re: Gilman's Diaries." Received by Mia Davis, 16 Feb. 2019.). In fact, a shift in the private and public sphere occurred: in Gilman's later years, she "wanted to be famous, and was worried about being forgotten after her death" (Knight, Denise. "Re: Gilman's Diaries." Received by Mia Davis, 15 Feb. 2019). Thus, while Gilman kept her diary for personal purposes during her adolescent years, this strictly private notion gradually merged more with public intent. Knight writes, "Certainly in her final years, her legacy took on greater urgency, and she worked diligently to preserve papers that would help others tell her story once she was gone" (Knight, Denise. "Re: Gilman's Diaries." Received by Mia Davis, 15 Feb. 2019.). Thus,

while Gilman may have focused on privacy throughout her life, age and a desire to be remembered soon fused this privacy with urgency towards public recognition.

The purpose behind Gilman's diaries evolved with what she desired at each point in her life: during her adolescence and adulthood, she desired that her diaries serve as a private coping mechanism and form of structure. In her later years, she desired that her diary serve as a resource for an autobiography and potential biographies, as well as a tool to come to terms and acknowledge her life through public remembrance. In this way, Gilman's diary allows us to look through the lens of a writer that was mainly influenced by private dimensions most of her life, yet whose work evolved into a public resource out of a desire for remembrance and a desire to make a contribution to humanity.

Comparing Sarton and Gilman

Despite the fact that Gilman's and Sarton's birthdates are separated by fifty-two years and that they both experienced different time periods, when comparing their diaries, a number of similarities between the text emerge. Perhaps one of the most significant and prominent parallels that can be drawn when comparing these authors' diaries is their mental mindset. Both Gilman and Sarton's journals showcase women who struggle with depression and feelings of isolation throughout their lives. However, these feelings of depression stem from places of commonality as well as from places of difference.

For instance, on one hand, a large portion of Gilman's isolation grows from her financial situation. In the following poem Gilman includes in her diary (when she's twenty) she writes:

Christmas Day.

Sunday December 25th. 1880.

Christmas night, and all alone!

All alone in the quiet room…

Aunt Caroline has gone to bed

Tired out with the week before…

….Thomas away

in Nevada. Never a friend

Christmas night with me to spend.

It makes me cry…

…And tired eyes like the soul inside

> And as lonely a heart as ever cried. (Knight, "The Diaries Volume 1" 27-8)

Gilman's poem makes clear her feelings of isolation. Many of her family members are away or sleeping due to stress and work. We witness a woman who experiences strong feelings of sadness that are exacerbated by financial stress and distant family members.

Like Gilman, Sarton also experienced feelings of isolation. Sarton writes:

> Oct. 11
>
> The joke is on me. I filled this weekend with friends so that I would not go down into depression, not knowing that I should have turned the corner and be writing poems… (Sarton 19)

While we see both writers struggling with loneliness, perhaps somewhat ironically, what triggers their unhappiness is opposite from each other. Gilman feels lonely because she is physically by herself—her financial hardship causes a lack of family unity and thus the isolationism that is exacerbated by the holidays. Sarton, on the other hand, feels lonelier when surrounded by *too many* individuals. She notes that she attempted to be social so that she would "not go down into a depression" when in reality she needed to be alone with her writing. Furthermore, she emphasizes her somewhat paradoxical belief that "solitude is one of the ways toward communion"(Sarton 103). In this way, the journal serves as a gauge for the writers to pin down their current mood and determine what they need in order to feel better.

Another important aspect to consider when comparing Sarton and Gilman's diaries are the structures and language of their entries. While these women suffered from similar issues and

emotions, their diaries depict completely different writing styles. Sarton's entries are emotionally transparent and in a story-telling tone. She chronicles her daily activities but does so in sensory manner. When reading Sarton's passages, we can *imagine* and *feel* how her day feels. In the following entry, Sarton writes:

January 8th

> Yesterday was a strange, hurried, uncentered day; yet I did not have to go out, the sun shone. Today I feel centered and time is a friend instead of the old enemy. It was zero this morning. I have a fire burning in my study, yellow roses and mimosa on my desk. There is an atmosphere of festival, of release, in the house. We are one, the house and I...(Sarton 81).

We can *feel* the sun shining and the warmth of the fire, and in turn, the "oneness" and comfort Sarton experiences within her home. The passage would read immensely differently if Sarton simply said, "Yesterday was a strange day.…Today, I have a fire burning in my study…etc." Instead, Sarton describes to us the specific sensations she feels. She is not simply documenting, she is transporting. While these passages are more abstract and arguably offer more room for factual inaccuracy, they serve an equally powerful purpose: they capture the story of Sarton's emotions, and we see how her *feelings* evolve throughout the year as opposed to an exact chronological documenting of the events within her day.

Gilman's entries, on the other hand, encompass less abstractions and more concrete activities that are not up for interpretation by the reader. In the following passages taken from

when Gilman was twenty-six and when her career began to pick up speed, we once again see a somewhat chronological listing of her day as opposed to a more introspective reflection:

> Sat. 15. 1890.
>
> Finish Lecture. Sup with Mrs. Carr. She comes over later and I read to her.
>
> Sun. 16.
>
> Alter lecture a little….Collection three dollars.
>
> Mon. 17.
>
> Wash dishes, work about general, rest some. Miss Liman called.
>
> Wed.19.
>
> Bad day. Don't accomplish anything…(Knight, "The Diaries of Charlotte Perkins Gilman Volume 2" 425)

Comparing these entries with *Journal of a Solitude*, obvious differences exist between the rhetoric. Gilman captures a bad day with one statement: "bad day." If Sarton were to experience a bad day, she'd expand on this emotion to take up multiple pages of an entry. We see one woman more focused on a more creative, emotional display of emotion, and another more focused on efficient, straightforward documentation. Gilman does not even spell out the whole word "supper" when she refers to "sup" in her entry from Saturday the 15th.

While both writers use the diary in different manners to recount their day, the act of journal keeping also serves as a mechanism for each author to create order and structure within their lives. Again, while the source of daily distress may differ, these authors both find comfort in documenting their day-to-day activities and keeping track of acquaintances within their journals. For instance, within one of Sarton's entries, she states:

November 10th

> I am in a limbo that needs to be patterned from within. People who have regular jobs can have no idea of just the problem of ordering a day that has no pattern imposed on it. (Sarton 53)

Keeping Sarton's perspective of order in mind, we look at the following entry by Gilman:

Saturday, Jan. 22. 1881

> Up and dressed at 4. Ironing all done by 6.30. Then take a nap.…Go to the Lecture Club.…Sewing, one word game, French etc. Retire at 9 in a state of abject sleepiness. (Knight, "The Diaries Volume 1" 33)

On one hand, we see Sarton, who uses her diary as a way to stay busy and help maintain a schedule within her life when she feels herself slipping into idleness. In contrast, Gilman uses her diary as a tool for structure, but in the opposite effect: she writes in her journal to wind down and keep track of the hectic nature of her week. We see one writer using a diary as a stimulant, and another as a relaxant. In both cases, they give rise to a mutual organization of daily activities

and musings: it appears that both writers have gaps in their journals for a similar variety of reasons—ranging from being too distracted from intense life events that cause a lack of writing, or even situations in which diary keeping is not recommended. For instance, in the following entry that occurred eight days after her previous entry, Sarton writes:

> May 6th
>
> There has been a long hiatus in this journal because I have had no days here alone, no days when time opened out before me….There is no space for what wells up from the subconscious; those dreams and images live in deep still water and simple submerge when the days get scattered. (Sarton 145)

We see that though usually Sarton uses her diary as a stimulant, she too can find herself so busied that even she lacks the time to write in solace when needed.

For Gilman, the gaps in her diaries that occurred outside the scope of being too busy and happened when she experienced a post-partum breakdown. Gilman writes:

> Mon. April 18th. 1887.
>
> Take baby to Mrs. Vaughn's during school. Back very tired. Egg nogg. Doze. Dine. Come over home, and am here now. Have made bed, made fire, washed dishes, write two notes. Am very tired.
>
> I have kept a journal since I was fifteen, the only blanks being in these last years of sickness and pain. I have done it because it was useful. Now I am to go away

> for my health, and shall not try to take any responsibilities with me, even this old friend.
>
> I am very sick with nervous prostration, and I think with some brain disease as well. No one can ever know what I have suffered in these last five years.
>
> Pain pain pain, till my mind has given away.
>
> O blind and cruel! Can *Love* hurt like this?
>
> You found me—you remember what.
>
> I leave you—O remember what, and learn to doubt your judgment before it seeks to mould another life as it has mine.
>
> I asked you a few days only before our marriage if you would take the responsibility entirely on yourself. You said yes. Bear it then. (Knight, "The Diaries Volume 1" 384-5)

Gilman acknowledges that the gaps in her diaries have occurred during "these last few years of sickness and pain" which consisted of the struggles she endured in adjusting to married life and the post-partum she experienced after giving birth to her daughter. Gilman not only acknowledges these past gaps but also realizes that in going forward in her treatment, she will not be allowed to "take any responsibilities… even [her] old friend." This passage demonstrates a vulnerability that is extremely rare throughout her diary. As argued earlier, Gilman's diaries are distinguishable because of her un-emotional tone. Thus, we can see the grand significance of a gap in Gilman's diary—it can signal an immense emotional breakdown.

This is an important element to consider in relation to Sarton—we see on one hand, when Gilman has a break down, she is advised to put her diary away, as keeping a journal was thought

to contribute to the mental distress Gilman underwent. Gilman actually sent a letter describing the symptoms she was experiencing to the nerve specialist S. Weir Mitchell. In response, Mitchell "promptly condemned her to the rest cure, which expressly prohibited women from reading and writing about anything, including themselves or their illness"(Cutter 1). Gilman followed this prescription, but experienced increased mental agony until she eventually allowed herself to start writing again. Such a prescription exemplifies the "male-dominated medical establishment [that] attempt[ed] to silence women"(Cutter 1). Because Gilman's journal served as a foundation for her to lay down her most basic activities and document the trajectory of her life as an evolving woman, a male doctor halted this activity as a means to silence a woman's voice—thinking that what we now know as post-partum was prompted by self-expression. Sarton, on the other hand, was never advised to stop writing in her journal when she underwent emotional turmoil. Instead, she used her journal as a way to directly deal with her strongest and most uncomfortable feelings. We see that both women battled with mental health, yet the difference in their time periods resulted with different socially accepted mechanisms on how to cope with such issues.

Sarton and Gilman's diaries reveal women who struggled with the societal expectations of their time. Both women were unconventional in their nature—Sarton, a lesbian, and Gilman, a woman who grappled with marriage, post-partum depression, and adhering to a "traditional" female lifestyle. Especially when considering a female's role in the household, Sarton and Gilman share almost identical values. Sarton says, "Women are at last becoming persons first and wives seconds, and that is as it should be" (Sarton 57). By documenting their lives, whether it be in the emotional manner of Sarton's text or the straightforward entries by Gilman, both writers partook in an "[inherent] form of feminist practice"(Schiwy 236). Journal keeping is

"holistic, inclusive and integrative, self-reflective and process-oriented, and concerned with the concrete experience of the individual woman"(Schiwy 236). In this way, Sarton and Gilman's accounts both exemplify how diaries can be used as a mode of feminist expression, but furthermore, a way for us to understand the societal expectations of their time. Despite their differences in terms of public and private underlines, both journals align in this way.

Understanding My Diary

During this last part of my project, I wanted to venture into *my own* journals and better understand the purpose behind my writings. After closely analyzing two other esteemed authors' diaries, I wondered how mine would compare: Would a clear influence of the private and public sphere emerge? Would my entries align with similarities that exist between Sarton and Gilman's diaries, or more towards one or neither at all? In the following chosen entries, I have included passages from primarily my college years. For sake of privacy, some of the names have been abbreviated.

The first thing I notice when analyzing my past entries is how I address my writings. Sometimes, I start with the somewhat cliché beginner of "Dear Diary." Other times, I will refer to my future self, often offering advice or documentations to the notion of me re-reading the entry when I am older or at a later time. Sometimes, I will not refer to anything specific at all and write in a more poetic manner. In any case, it is evident that when I write, I am writing to either the self or to an abstract audience that cannot be clearly defined.

Although "Dear Diary" may be a cliché, expected address, when actually considered, it proves to me more thought provoking that what may be initially expected. When people, like myself, address an entry to a diary through phrases such as "Dear Diary," what or who exactly is this audience? We know that a diary itself is a non-human object that obviously cannot be a real audience to writing. Thus, the diary is personified. When I start to actually consider what I am referring to when I imagine this personified diary, it brings rise to somewhat trippy thoughts. At one point in my diary, I begin with the phrase, "Dear Journal -god- whatever you are…" Another time, I say, "Dear Journal (or future Mia!).

Is this "Dear Diary" an address to an unclear, omnipotent journal-god essence? Is this "Dear Diary" addressed to nothing at all, and rather serves as a fun, traditional beginning to each page? Or, is this "Dear Diary" an allusion to myself, or furthermore, to anyone whom I enable to step into the shoes of the audience role at a given time?

I am emphasizing these addresses because it plays directly into the private and public motivation that this paper studies. Since this is my own journal, I have the ability of knowing more about what I was thinking or intending when I wrote the entries, as opposed to being an outside reader to someone else's text. If a stranger were to ask me if they could flip through my journal as is, I would, without hesitation, say no. Or, I would allow them to read it if I were allowed to edit material as I pleased.

That being said, when I write my diary, I admit that I am not completely transparent in my emotions. Sometimes, I will acknowledge moments in my life that I am struggling with, but I notice that often these difficult times will be abbreviated or accompanied with optimism, even if I am not feeling positive when I write such experiences down. For instance, in the following entry, I write:

10/8/16

> When I don't get enough sleep or I am sleep deprived, I become very sad. I haven't slept well these past few nights. I'm going to bed early tonight. Anyway, I just need to catch up on some sleep.

From this entry alone, it's unclear what exactly the underlying cause of sadness that I am referring to is. I emphasize the notion that sleep deprivation exacerbates these negative feelings, but I do not specify what these negative feelings are. In this way, I feel that when I am feeling

upset and documenting my day, I do it in a similar manner to Gilman. Like Gilman, it appears to be a coping mechanism to briefly describe feelings of sadness as a way to avoid acknowledging how I'm actually feeling in that moment. However, just from reading my diary, I see this as both a positive and negative. Sometimes, I think I could benefit from completely flushing my feelings out and acknowledging my most uncomfortable emotions in a private manner. However, there are scenarios where I think drawing out my negative emotions (especially late at night when I am more prone to be emotional) only intensifies the feelings and can feel overwhelming. In such cases, it can be more beneficial to record these emotions in an abbreviated manner that twists the situation with positive, even if a bit forced, optimism.

Like Gilman, I too hold my own forms of "Thought and Figgerings"—or writings that I keep separate from my diary that hold my more sensitive entries. While Gilman kept these as scraps of paper or letters, I keep such entries on my laptop, or I write them on a piece of paper and throw it out. Somehow, it feels safer for me to keep my entries on a digital file, because someone would have to access my computer, which unlike a journal, cannot be easily opened and obtained. Marlene Schiwy, a journal scholar and diary keeper herself, comments on her own personal experience in regards to dealing with the fears of an outside source getting a hold of her private writings. She writes, "I began keeping a journal when I was about 11 years old….I bought myself a five-year diary with lock and key and hid it among my mother's lingerie.…I discovered that my mother was reading my diary…and decided journal writing was dangerous business"(Schiwy 238). These fears are not uncommon, as Schiwy comments that numerous women in her journal workshops "stopped as a result of having had their privacy invaded"(Schiwy 238). Thus, like Schiwy and other women, I am acknowledging that when I write in my journal, I am definitely writing with an underlying tone of "if someone got a hold of

this, would I feel uncomfortable and in any way be potentially jeopardized?" When I write, I am hypersensitive to a worst-case private to public scenario: having something private consumed in a public way when it was not intended to be.

In terms of actual content, what actually goes on in my own private life shares similarities and differences between Gilman and Sarton. Due to growing up in entirely different time periods, there are clear differences between my journals and the other two: for instance, Gilman grows up in poverty, in a household with an emotionally distant mother and a father distant by location. In my childhood, I grew up with two parents who constantly told me they loved me, and I was privileged in terms of financial stability. Furthermore, because Sarton's *Journal of a Solitude* was written when she was in her early sixties, in one sense, it's impossible for me to completely relate to her, as she wrote in a stage of life that I have yet to reach. However, despite these differences, strong universalities among all our diaries become apparent.

Gilman's early diaries prove to be comparable to my own life, as some entries were written during her adolescence. A variety of patterns between my diary and hers emerge: one being blossoming romantic interests and furthermore, a transition from adolescence to womanhood. In terms of attraction and growing up, this involves discovering preferences and desired traits in a partner. For instance, in the following entry, I write:

Oct. Something

> Tonight, I went to A's birthday dinner. It was just funny & interesting to observe. Somehow, I felt much older than everyone else (granted, there were a lot of Freshmen). Anyway, I was sitting next to this sophomore…he's physically very

> attractive, but I didn't find myself attracted to him, even though a lot of girls do or would. I'm just over that immature thing.

In the follow entry, when Gilman is about the same age as when I wrote the above entry (19 years old), she writes,

> Thursday. June 26. 1879.
>
> Pleasant morning call from Edward. He gives me his photograph.…I calmly inform him that I like him better tha[n] A[rthur]…
>
> Sun. July 20.
>
> …We go out… the boys swim…discovered by Edward who awakes me.…I like him in a grandmotherly sort of way. (Knight, "The Diaries Volume 1" 15)

Both Gilman and I go through the process of exploring what we are attracted to in the public world and documenting the process. Furthermore, there seems to be an overarching sense that both Gilman and I felt somewhat older than our surrounding crowd, such as when I state, "feeling much older than everyone else" and when Gilman similarly says, "I like him in a grandmotherly sort of way." In this way, Gilman and I appear to share similar personality traits.

However, like Sarton's *Journal of a Solitude*, my journal encompasses endeavors at self-understanding, and furthermore, questioning. This is something that I appreciate about Sarton—despite the fact that she writes in a later chapter of her life, she continues to challenge herself with the same questions that I do as a young woman: those questions being, "Why am I the way that I am?" and "How do I find happiness in this life?" This is the beauty of *Journal of a*

Solitude—whether one keeps a diary or not, most individuals constantly search for the answers to such universal questions throughout her or his life. Furthermore, just as Sarton challenges herself in a variety of ways, I do as well in my own journal. I write:

11/4

Dear Journal—

Today, it poured. I was walking to the Capitol when the rain started to come down. My Dad told me on the phone I should do something every day that challenges me, so I went inside he Capitol by myself, in my gym clothes. I walked to the Senate Room, and looked at the governors' portraits. I watched the kids on field trips excitedly giggle and talk among themselves. I was absolutely soaked by the time I made it back.... I chatted with a nice girl on the elevator…we wondered how we would dry our shoes.

Now, considering the above entry when reading the following passage by Sarton:

January 5th

My own belief is that one regards oneself, if one is a serious writer, as an instrument for experiencing. Life—all of it—flows through this instrument and is distilled through it into works of art. How one lives as a private person is intimately bound into the work. And at some point I believe one has to stop holding back for fear of alienating some imaginary reader or real relative or friend, and come out with personal truth. If we are to understand the human

> condition, and if we are to accept ourselves in all the complexity, self-doubt, extravagance of feeling, guilt joy, the slow freeing of the self to its full capacity for action and creation, both as human being and as artist, we have to know all we can about each other, and we have to be willing to go naked. (Sarton 77)

Just as I challenged myself to *experience* something new and perhaps intimidating, and furthermore, just as I allowed myself to "get naked" and write about this apprehension, yet eventual success, Sarton's entries *also* reveal a woman who challenges herself by opening up about solitude, depression, but furthermore, the meaning of being a true artist. In this way, Sarton and I challenge ourselves to interact in the public sphere and write about it. Sarton takes it a step further by prompting us to share these intimate recordings of such experiences with one another. While I may not be as comfortable with the idea of publishing my experiences, I can at least align with Sarton in the fact that I am taking the time to write down my adventures and challenges in a way that can be further reflected on and understood.

Thus, my diary appears to be a fusion in style in terms of the private and public: varying from short, "listy" entries that are simply a straightforward recount of my day that aren't written with the consideration of an "audience hovering at the edge of the page", to a more in depth analysis of my day and emotions that I choose to occasionally share with loved ones. For instance, comparing the following entries, the variance in my journal becomes apparent:

3/17/2015

Today:

-watched “The Big Short”

-Zoe and I talked to Barbie on speaker

-read some of *Swann’s Way*

-intern research

-got a haircut @ Beautique

-my hair looks healthy

In another entry from the same journal, I write:

Nov. 2nd, 2017

When I first arrived in Edinburgh, all I could think to myself was, “How am I going to do this for four months?” I felt like I was drowning in a sea of unfamiliarity, and constantly wishing I were at UT.…Now, with only a few months left abroad, I realize I will truly miss this place, and more importantly, the people. The students are so open-minded. Being in an international environment has enlightened on me a variety of unique lifestyles and cultural experiences. Perhaps more importantly, it was broadened my perspectives while simultaneously giving me the comfort that human nature is fundamentally the same—we all love to laugh, we all desire inclusion and acceptance…

In the first entry, there’s clearly a lack of emotion or any use of creative rhetorical devices. However, in the other entry, I am extremely more reflective, and I paint a picture of my

experience abroad. While I have never shared the entry that consisted of the lists, I have read the entry regarding my study abroad experience to a loved one.

Reading two different diaries and then comparing them with my own allowed me to me to understand journal keeping and the underlying influences of how a diary is written. Going forward in my diary keeping, I hope to be able to write freely and relax without overthinking. However, in terms of re-reading past entries, I feel that having a stronger grasp of how influences and an implicit audience plays into journal keeping will allow me to better appreciate my own writing. Whether it be a short, to the point list, or a long, emotional account, I realize that both types of entries hold more complexities and underlying influences than what I may have thought in the past.

Concluding Thoughts

This process taught me that two different diaries can lean towards a more private or public motivation, but can still share underlying similarities. May Sarton's *Journal of a Solitude* holds key differences from Gilman's *The Diaries of Charlotte Perkins Gilman,* due to the fact that Sarton anticipated the publication of her journal. Yet, that is not to say that the private and public influences that played into each of these writers' journals caused a complete difference in the final product. Both journals and diaries exemplify women who were complex, and furthermore, who struggled. Whether it was with mental illness, financial hardship, or loneliness, both *Journal of a Solitude* and *The Diaries of Charlotte Perkins Gilman* showcase insights into the lives of women who experienced deeply, yet took an extra step to document such experiences.

What can be taken away from comparing different accounts, and ultimately, analyzing a personal diary? First, writing this thesis caused me to consider the notion of *intention*. How do the intentions differ between these writers, and furthermore, how do such intentions ultimately affect a diary and its implicit audience? It seems that because Gilman and Sarton intended, or at the very least, desired that their journals serve certain roles and audiences, the style and syntax differed. Sarton intended to paint a visual picture for her readers in a manner so that she could transport them into the life of a depressed, lesbian woman. By doing so, Sarton de-stigmatized pre-conceived notions of homosexuality, or even women for that matter, by describing emotions that all humans at some point experience in a way that could be understood. Gilman initially intended that her diary serve a more private purpose: organizing her thoughts and daily actions for herself. Writing in this way likely served as a coping mechanism, as Gilman did not desire to

ruminate on these activities every day, but rather to have a space to write them down as she wished.

With all this in mind, I approached my own diary. I discovered that my diary holds a variety of intentions: sometimes I write with strictly private motivations, when other times, I write while imagining an outside audience. I realized that such intentions affect the way that I write my entries. For instance, when I am having a bad day, I am not in a mental space to draw out my emotions on paper, but rather, I choose to document them in a straightforward way as a means of just getting them out of my head. However, if I go on a fun date, I choose to write about it in a humorous, vivid way, in which I am considering how an outside audience would react (hopefully, with a laugh). Through this process, I have realized the following paradox: it seems that when I write for strictly myself, my entries are shorter and less descriptive than when I write with the consideration of an outside audience.

Thus, it becomes apparent that a diary or journal serves a variety of purposes, and can do so in perhaps an unexpected way—whether that be a private purpose, a public purpose, or a fusion of both. Trying to understand these influences can be broadened beyond just diaries. If we can better understand the *motivations* behind any type of writing, we can better understand the writing itself. Through the analysis of Sarton's journal, Gilman's diary, and my *own* diary, I not only hold a stronger interpretation of the influences that play into these specific texts, but also, a newfound foundation to interpret writing that goes beyond journals and diaries. I hope to continue to write in and understand my own diaries, but furthermore, to apply the lessons I have learned from this thesis to any future literary endeavor I embark upon.

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Biography

Mia Davis was born in Houston, Texas on June 1, 1996. She enrolled in the Plan II Honors Program in 2015, where she minored in English and received a Business Certificate from McCombs. Her junior year of college, she studied abroad in Edinburgh, Scotland where she took classes pertaining to Art, International Business, and Scottish Literature. Ms. Davis plans to pursue a creative field, as she has held internships at *TexasMonthly Magazine* and *PaperCity*. When she is not writing, she can be found with her two dachshunds, Chester and Charlie, or doodling in her notebook.